To: Oregon Education Investment Board (OEIB)
From: Eduardo Angulo, Salem/Keizer Coalition for Equality Ex. Dir.
Date: September 11, 2012
Re: Update from the Oregon Alliance for Education Equity (OAEE)

Good afternoon. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Eduardo Angulo. I am the Executive Director of the Salem-Keizer Coalition for Equality. I'm also here as a Steering Committee member of the Oregon Alliance for Education Equity (OAEE). The Alliance member organizations have presented to the OEIB before, and we are here today to give you an update on our work.

(1) First, the Alliance is official. Since we last presented back in April, our informal coalition has become an official Alliance. We have reached consensus around our mission and vision statements, and I have included a list of our initial organizational members. We also have the support of national and state organizations that support our mission and vision in principle. We've just appointed a permanent steering committee. There is more information in your packets.

Most of Oregon's leading organizations of communities of color and the immigrant communities have come together with strong education reform advocacy organizations to support Oregon leadership's quest for meaningful cradle to career education by 2025 for all children and youth in our state.

We are coming here today with specific concerns and a sense of urgency to ensure that our students of color and ELLs are included in the promises offered in the Governor's 40-40-20 vision. We believe that to make this promise a reality, we, the representatives of the most negatively affected communities, must hold ourselves accountable for the poor return on investment our children have received from our public education system. We are here today to also hold accountable all elected and appointed education leaders for an education system that continues failing students of color and ELLs.

In 2012, the current education outlook for the children and youth of our communities of color and ELLs is dismal and we must, by working together, change that.

We all must hold ourselves accountable and act as active partners with our parents and families to create and implement an education trajectory that meets the challenges and makes Oregon's 40-40-20 vision a reality by 2025. As you know, this will require improvements to early childhood services and education, K-12 schools and supports, and our system of higher education.

To meet these challenges we want to stay in close and transparent communication with you. This Alliance Update today is part of that commitment.

(2) Our Alliance first came together to address inequities in student discipline rates, and we are continuing that work. **ACLU's 2010 Report on Oregon's School-to-Prison-Pipeline** highlighted that African American, Latino, and Native American students are being suspended and expelled at a rate as much as twice that of their white peers.[1] National data tells us that it's likely that students of color are being disproportionately

[1] Oregon's School to Prison Pipeline Report. ACLU of Oregon. Available: http://aclu-or.org/content/aclu-report-oregon%e2%80%99s-school-prison-pipeline-0.

disciplined for the same infractions as their white peers.[2] The first step to addressing this problem was to make sure the data was public and easily accessible.

In the Winter of 2012, we successfully worked with the Oregon Department of Education to create a publically accessible, on-line database of district-by-district discipline data disaggregated by race and ethnicity. We are pleased to report that this partnership with ODE resulted in phase I of the database going live in May.[3] We're excited to use this tool to work with districts to identify challenges in their discipline numbers and partner to solve them.

We're also hopeful that, as the OEIB members are looking at **Achievement Compacts** and determining supports and interventions for school districts, that the discipline data can be a compliment to your work. We want to work with you to analyze this discipline data in a subset of school districts and identify the best disciplinary practices in Oregon and around the nation that could serve as models.

(3) The Alliance is currently investigating current practices around student race and ethnicity data collection, and we have some concerns. The Federal Government has changed the way they're asking states to report student race and ethnicity data.[4] We think it's important that you have a thorough understanding of the problem.

The new federal reports first require the State to identify whether a student is Hispanic. If a parent or student reports yes, that student is counted as Hispanic whether or not they see that as their primary identification. Then students are asked to check a second box about student race – White, African-American, Asian, Pacific Islander, or Native American.

We're concerned this new reporting system is problematic for our data in Oregon in a number of ways.

One member of the Alliance told us about his grandchildren, who are half-Black and half-Latino. They've always marked African-American on previous reporting forms as their primary identity. Now they mark Hispanic, and then choose Black or African-American. These students will now only be considered Hispanic. The same is true for students that mark Hispanic and White; they will be added to the Hispanic total.

This is playing out statewide – we're seeing a relatively dramatic increase in the number of students counted as Hispanic (and some increases in achievement of Hispanic students)**. Our concern is that these achievement gains may simply be a matter of adding more high-performing students to this category rather than actually doing better with students who have previously been struggling.** We won't know unless we clean up this data.

Another concern is the under-identification of Native American students and tribal members in this new system. Native students tend to be a very multi-racial group of students. Under the old system a student could choose to select "Native American" or "multi-racial" depending on their primary identification. Under the new system, with no multi-racial option, students tend to mark each race or ethnicity that applies to them. If a

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[2] Losen, Daniel (2011). Discipline Policies, Successful Schools, and Racial Justice. A report by the National Education Policy Center. Available: http://nepc.colorado.edu/publication/discipline-policies.

[3] District and state discipline data in a searchable database is available here: http://www.ode.state.or.us/apps/Navigation/Navigation.Web/default.aspx#/Discipline.

[4] The federal guidelines, which took effect in the 2010-11 school year, are available here: http://www2.ed.gov/policy/rschstat/guid/raceethnicity/index.html.

student selects Hispanic and Native American, they are counted only as Hispanic. If they select Native American and any other race, they are counted as multi-racial without being given the opportunity to choose that identification. As a result, we're seeing a decline in the number of Native American students in our database.[5] This has the potential to impact Title 9 funding from the Federal Government.

We're seeing a similar decline in the number of African-American students, even though census data indicates that the African-American population in Oregon is increasing.[6]

A third concern is that the guidelines require every student to be identified. If a student inadvertently identifies himself/herself incorrectly in this new and often confusing system, that can be problematic. **But what is even more concerning is that if a student doesn't self-identify, then someone else is required to identify that student by observation for them.** Office staff and teachers need to be culturally competent and well-trained in how to appropriately collect this information from students and families to ensure they are offered appropriate services and entered in the correct category in the database.

There are districts in this state and states across the country that are collecting more robust and accurate student race and ethnicity data and are still able to meet federal reporting requirements. There are organizations in Oregon that have developed recommendations for how to more accurately collect data.[7]

More accurate and robust data will allow us to take more precise looks at student achievement data, gaps, and gains to ensure supports and interventions are targeted at the right problems and working for the kids who most need them.

We want you to know that we've initiated a conversation with ODE on this issue. Last month we had a productive meeting with Doug Kosty, and we intend to continue our work with him and the database team at ODE. We want you to be aware and informed about this work because it directly impacts the student database that the OEIB is considering.

(4) We are here to continue to express our support for disaggregated data and setting higher goals on the Achievement Compacts. We want to reinforce our appreciation of including disaggregated data on the Achievement Compacts. If we are going to be precise in our diagnosis of whether our supports and interventions are working, and for whom they're working, we must look at the impact on all students and the specific, and almost always different, impact on subgroups of students.

We've testified to you before about the urgent need for meaningful involvement of community and parents in the development of the Achievement Compacts and their applications as well as oversight of the implementations. We are all outraged that some school districts have set goals that are essentially flat or actually promise to take students backwards in terms of student outcomes. **This is unacceptable!**

Parents and community leaders need to be part of goal setting and oversight for the Achievement Compacts. We need to help parents become the **"demand parents"** Dr. Crew writes about in his book **Only Connect: *The Way to Save Our Schools*.**

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[5] Data from a presentation to a group of OAEE members by Jane Waite comparing 2010 census data with ODE enrollment numbers.
[6] Ibid.
[7] The Coalition for Communities of Color has developed a "Research Protocol for the Study of Racial Disparities" that includes a best practice race and ethnicity data collection form. Jane Waite has developed a handbook for school districts to support them in gathering accurate data.

If we as communities of the negatively affected wait until 2025 (the year of the 40-40-20 goals) based only on trust in the education system and hoping for the best; we will have another generation of students of color and ELLs go through the system unserved. Together we must ensure now that this does not happen to another generation of our children and youth.

We know from research from the **Chicago Consortium on School Research** that schools with meaningful and positive parent-community ties were ten times more likely to improve in math and four times more likely to improve in reading than similar schools without those ties.[8]
We believe that if community members were a part of the goal setting in achievement compacts, you would not have received compacts with flat or backwards-moving goals.

In addition, when the state identifies the schools and districts whose students need rapid improvement the most; it will be critical that we have parents and the community involvement as a critical component of effective school and district turn-around.

(5) Finally, there is an urgent need for the implementation of the Minority Teachers Act and meaningful cultural competency strategies and practices. Almost all growth in student enrollment in Oregon is happening among students of color, especially Latino students. We urgently need to recruit minority teachers and create the infrastructure to successfully retain them. We also need to ensure that all teachers have the training necessary to effectively connect with the students and families in our increasingly diverse student population. The OAEE is looking into what we can do in these areas, and we expect to come back to you with concrete suggestions.

We know there are going to be more issues for us to work together on in the coming months. We look forward to reviewing and commenting on the funding proposal you are drafting and we want to be part of the strategizing on how to ensure equity-based funding for high-needs and low income students of color and ELLs.

And one last important point: We fully support our teachers and administrators and want to always work collaboratively with them to help our students, but the Oregon Alliance for Education Equity members have come together to support our children and youth and parents first. We strongly believe that the challenge for education equity in Oregon will only be solve by always putting the children first, not the adults.

Thank you again so much for your consideration of these important issues and for your dedication to improving educational outcomes in Oregon.

[8] The Essential Supports. Consortium on Chicago School Research. Available: http://ccsr.uchicago.edu/publications/essential-supports.

OREGON ALLIANCE FOR EDUCATION EQUITY (OAEE)

VISION

Oregon Communities of Color, English Language Learners, advocacy organizations, and other allies are united to ensure that schools promote equity, eliminate disparities, and value diversity so that *all* students are prepared to become successful adults.

MISSION

The Oregon Alliance for Education Equity is a non-partisan coalition of community organizations that represent communities of color, English Language Learners (ELLs), education advocates, families/parents, allies and other stakeholders. We are united to eliminate racial and ethnic disparities in education and ensure that students of color and students learning English graduate from high school prepared to be successful adults and global citizens. We educate, advocate, and engage with decision-makers to support policy changes that promote equity for students in and out of school.

ORGANIZATION MEMBERS:

Salem/Keizer Coalition for Equality, APANO, NAACP Branches from Salem-Keizer, Corvallis, & Eugene/Springfield, Centro Cultural of Washington County, Casa Latinos Unidos of Corvallis, Latino Network of Portland, Portland Urban League, Unete from Medford, Stand for Children, Chalkboard Project, REAP Inc., Portland Teachers Program, Oregon Native American 9 Tribal Governments, Oregon Indian Education Association, Casa Latinos Unidos de Benton County, & ACLU of Oregon

Supported in Principle By:

National Council of La Raza, Education Trust, Oregon Commissions on Hispanic, Black and Asian Affairs, Self Enhancement Inc., Adelante Mujeres, Oregon Diversity Institute, Latinos In Leadership from Reynolds, Portland Parent Union, BPI, & Si Se Puede Oregon, Mano a Mano Una Voz Coalition from Jackson County, Latinos Unidos Siempre (LUS), PCUN, CAUSA, Blacks In Government & Center for Intercultural Organizing

NEW YORK TIMES

August 28, 2012

New Code Aims to Ease Suspensions of Students

By AL BAKER

New York City public-school students can no longer be suspended for one-time, low-level infractions, and the youngest pupils can be suspended only for 5 days for midlevel offenses, down from 10, according to new disciplinary rules posted by the Education Department this week.

With an aim of reducing punishments that keep students out of the classroom, the department's new disciplinary code also guides teachers to intervene quickly with misbehaving students and to try counseling before moving to punishment.

"We want to be able to address improper behavior before it reaches a higher level," said Marge Feinberg, a department spokeswoman. "And to do that, we are focused on providing strong student support services coupled with parent involvement."

Under the new code, which is reviewed and revised annually, students in all grades will no longer face any form of suspension for transgressions like being late for school, being absent without an excuse, talking back to teachers or school leaders, or carrying prohibited items like smartphones and beepers. They can still be punished in other ways, including being kept from extracurricular activities or being sent to the principal's office. And students repeatedly removed from the classroom for low-level offenses can still, in limited instances, be suspended.

For those in kindergarten through third grade, the new code reduced the maximum suspension to 5 days from 10 for certain midlevel infractions, like shoving, engaging in minor altercations or drawing graffiti on school property. More serious misbehavior like bullying, violent fights or starting fires can still lead to longer suspensions, as much as 90 days in some cases or a year if a firearm is involved.

In severe cases, a student can be moved to a school that specializes in students

with disciplinary problems. The rules on expulsion from the system have not changed. It is possible only for students at least 17 years old, and it happens rarely: two cases in the past three years, according to Ms. Feinberg.

City Council members and advocates including the New York Civil Liberties Union had pushed for changes to the code, arguing that suspensions were too harsh or unnecessary in many cases, needlessly keeping students out of school. A 2010 city law required the Education Department to regularly report data on school suspensions. According to the most recent report, 73,441 suspensions occurred in the 2010-11 year, compared with 71,721 in the previous year — a 2.4 percent increase. It was unclear how many of those cases would not have resulted in suspensions under the new policy.

"The overarching message is that students belong in the classroom," said Donna Lieberman, executive director of the New York Civil Liberties Union. "This change in the disciplinary code would result in more students in the classroom, more often, and teachers having the mandate to discipline students with positive educational approaches."

In City Council testimony in June, the civil liberties group said there were 31,879 suspensions in 2002-3, the first year of the Bloomberg administration.

Michael Mulgrew, president of the United Federation of Teachers, the New York City teachers' union, criticized the administration for instituting new rules that did not adequately address the core reasons underlying students' misbehavior.

Mr. Mulgrew pointed to one new section of the code — titled "Progressive Ladder of Support and Disciplinary Consequences," — and criticized it as a set of "buzzwords."

He said that in order to adhere to the new policies that called for more counseling instead of suspensions, teachers would need more training and more support from professionals like guidance counselors and psychologists.

"Student behavior and school culture is about having the right services in place," said Mr. Mulgrew, who added that the number of guidance counselors had gone down recently. "This looks like a quick little fix to get the number of suspensions down," he said.